

Tijuana River Valley Comprehensive Protection and Rehabilitation Act of 2017

Sponsored by Representative Juan Vargas (CA-51) and Representative Darrell Issa (CA-49)

Issue

- The Tijuana River Valley is a broad natural floodplain containing a variety of wetland and riparian areas and is a small portion of the Tijuana River's 1,700 square miles of watershed;
- The Tijuana River's watershed area includes portions of south San Diego County and northern Baja California, Mexico;
- Near the coast is the most extensive salt marsh in southern California, which is preserved within the Tijuana River National Estuarine Sanctuary; and further inland, the Tijuana River is vegetated with riparian habitat;
- The floodplain of the Tijuana River Valley currently contains a mixture of agricultural fields, equestrian facilities, rural housing, riparian woodland, and disturbed habitats;
- Periodic rains in the region have produced flooding and cross-border flows of wastewater and sewage, causing public health concerns as well as disruptions to the local tourist economy and military readiness;
- In February 2017, as reported in the Transboundary Bypass Flows into the Tijuana River report released by the United States section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, approximately 28 million gallons of sewage was discharged into the Tijuana River Valley, resulting in beach closures throughout the region.

Solution

Develop a comprehensive protection and rehabilitation program for the Tijuana River Valley area to ensure that sewage, trash and sediment no longer leak from Tijuana into San Diego County.

Bill Summary

The *Tijuana River Valley Comprehensive Protection and Rehabilitation Act of 2017* develops a coordinated program—including federal, states, local and Mexican agencies and departments—to provide technical assistance and a secure funding mechanism. Through the direction of the Army Corp of Engineers, the Secretary of the Army will produce a feasibility and technical assistance plan to update the wastewater infrastructure to prevent flooding of sewage, trash and sediment into the Tijuana River Valley area. Once the plan is finalized, the Secretary will be able to provide grants for infrastructure projects on both sides of the border. The bill also creates a Transboundary Water Way Alert system and other monitoring and notification requirements.

Important Facts

- The Tijuana River Valley Planning Area is bounded by the city of Imperial Beach and the Otay Mesa-Nestor community to the north, the San Ysidro community to the east, Mexico to the south, and Border Field State Park and Imperial Beach to the west.
- The Tijuana River Valley is bounded on the south by high mesas and deep canyons covered by chaparral, sage scrub, and grasslands.

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